

BURNED AREA RECOVERY FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT "AT A GLANCE"

In Response to the Fires of 2000...



The Bitterroot National Forest has completed the Burned Area Recovery Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that addresses: **Fuel Reduction in Portions of the Burned Areas, Watershed Improvement in Certain Burned Drainages, and Reforesting Burned Lands.** This document provides a very brief overview of the basic information in the FEIS.

WHERE: The project area includes burned areas on the Montana portion of the Bitterroot National Forest land that burned in the wildfires of 2000. This includes portions of the Stevensville, Darby, Sula, and West Fork Ranger Districts.

WHY: Fuels need to be reduced in certain burned areas to decrease the risks future fires will pose to human safety, property and improvements, and resources.

Watershed improvements are needed in certain burned drainages to eliminate or reduce adverse effects to streams and fish habitat.

Reforestation is needed in certain burned areas where natural regeneration would not provide the desired types or amounts of trees or where no seed sources were left following the fires.

WHAT: The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) analyzes seven alternatives, including No Action and the Proposed Action, which was presented for public comment in February, 2001.



The alternatives were developed in response to the following key issues identified during public scoping and during the DEIS comment period:

- Need for fuel hazard reduction
- Effects on soils, watersheds, and aquatic habitat
- Changes in motorized and non-motorized access
- Bark beetle risk
- Economic opportunities
- Need for a Forest Plan amendment
- Effects on unroaded lands
- Effects on old growth and Flammulated Owls

Alternative A (No Action)

This alternative serves as a baseline for comparing the effects of all of the alternatives.

Fuel Reduction - None; all fuels, both green and dead trees, would be left as they exist.

Watershed Improvement - No improvements to watershed conditions proposed.

Reforesting Burned Lands - No trees would be planted; burned areas would be left to reforest naturally.

Forest Plan Amendment Needed - No

Alternative B (Proposed Action)

Fuel Reduction - (about 58,960 acres). Fuels would be reduced to a desired level. Some marketable fire-killed trees would be removed and certain stands that burned at low severity would be thinned. Timber sales,

service contracts, and firewood cutting would be used to achieve objectives. Fuels remaining after these activities would be burned or cut and scattered. Some treatment areas would only have non-harvest fuel reduction activities, such as prescribed burning.

Watershed Improvement - In all action alternatives, proposals involve road maintenance activities to reduce sediment by improving the way roads handle water; rehabilitating roads not needed in the near future (placing in "storage"); or road decommissioning or recontouring. Aquatic habitat improvements considered in all action alternatives include removing fish barriers, adding woody debris to streams, and planting trees along streams. Alternative B proposes the following:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Road Maintenance | 502 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 102 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 60 mi. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 31,824 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - Yes

Alternative C

Fuel Reduction - None; all fuels, both green and dead trees, would be left as they exist.

Watershed Improvement -

| | |
|--|---------|
| Road Maintenance | 502 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 74 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 88 mi. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 36,259 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - No

Alternative D

Fuel Reduction - (about 59,639 acres). In addition to the proposals described in Alternative B, this alternative proposes: some additional areas where fire-killed trees would be removed; thinning more stands to reduce bark beetle susceptibility; and constructing temporary roads in some locations to improve economics.

Watershed Improvement -

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|--|---------|
| Road Maintenance | 502 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 82 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 80 mi. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 32,029 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - Yes

Alternative E

Fuel Reduction - (about 19,831 acres). This alternative proposes to reduce fuels as described in Alternative B but only in the wildland-urban interface and ponderosa pine stands. No green trees are planned for removal.

Watershed Improvement -

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|--|---------|
| Road Maintenance | 502 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 74 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 88 mi. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 20,227 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - Yes

Alternative F

Fuel Reduction - (about 46,239 acres). This alternative was added following the DEIS in response to comments and further Forest Service review of the alternatives. This alternative reduces fuels in similar ways as the Proposed Action but includes the following modifications: reduces management-caused sediment inputs; accomplishes watershed improvements while minimizing access changes; and improves economics.

Watershed Improvement -

| | |
|--|---------|
| Road Maintenance | 513 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 105 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 46 mi. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 32,977 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - Yes

Alternative G

Fuel Reduction - (about 9,223 acres). This alternative was added following the DEIS to respond to issues brought forward by certain environmental groups and individuals commenting on the DEIS. Only non-commercial fuel reduction work would occur; it focuses on fuels within 40 meters of private residences and in limited areas where fuel conditions are outside historic ranges.

Watershed Improvement -

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|--|-----------|
| Road Maintenance | 298 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 30 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 526 mi. |
| Log Barrier Installation | 2,500 ac. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 4,167 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - Yes

Alternative F (Modified)

Fuel Reduction - (about 43,700 acres). This alternative reduces fuels in similar ways as Alternative F but includes the following modifications: reduces harvesting, uses logging systems that cause less soil disturbance, reduces temporary road construction, and increases the stream buffer width in one drainage.

Watershed Improvement -

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|--|---------|
| Road Maintenance | 513 mi. |
| Pull Culverts, Stabilize, Place in "Storage" | 105 mi. |
| Road Decommissioning or Recontouring | 46 mi. |
| Aquatic Habitat Impvt. | YES |

Reforestation Burned Lands - About 33,150 acres would be planted.
Forest Plan Amendment Needed - Yes